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SABINE OF STRASBOURG :
THE SOMNAMBULIST ARCHITECT.



HE phenomena of sleep are many. Slumber, dreaming, somnambulism, syncope, are yet among the unexplained things which our Creator seems to keep shrouded for good reasons. The circumstances attendant upon those various stages of sleep, when will seems powerless, and another power has control, are so varied and singular, that an intense interest centres around every narration of the phenomena; and we find ourselves, as it were, over the confines of mortality, when we enter upon the contemplation of the outward expressions of the mystery.

We do not purpose a dissertation on the theme, which more properly belongs to the medical and philosophical journals; but have in mind the case of SABINE STEINBACH, the maiden architect of the Strasbourg Cathedral, whose wonderful art-talent, exercised in an extraordinary degree when under the influence of somnambulism, renders the narration of the legend of her love and labors, one of interest, even in the art view of the case.

The fourteenth century was a grand art era in Europe, for during that time those vast cathedrals of Germany, France and Italy arose, whose size and perfectness, and almost miraculous beauty, strike the beholders with wonder and awe. From base to dome they are covered with such exquisite chiseling; such beauty of design and figure; such fitness in ornament—all in keeping with the general grandeur of the structure, as shames even those ancient wonders of art which have come down to us from the Greek and Roman. Gazing upon them—upon their almost countless peaks, pinnacles, cornices, pillars, alcoves, arches, reliefs, statues, the beholder might fancy myriads of gnomes, skilled in the wonders of the under-world, to have wrought for ages upon the structure, with the purpose of showing to man their superior skill and genius, so almost incomprehensibly numerous and perfect are these records of the art-enthusiasts of that time.

So great was the enthusiasm with which these vast Christian temples were reared, so abundant the supply of artistic skill, that at the time Erwin de Steinbach sub-

mitted his plan of the great tower of Strasbourg to Bishop Conrad, of Lichtenberg, the most skillful artisans flocked in such multitudes to the work, that the chroniclers of the time compared them to a whole population engaged upon it, forming, as they state, one of the most extraordinary spectacles of the time. And such was the one-mindedness with which this mass of artists conducted their simultaneous labor, that no single name is preserved prior to that of Steinbach. Of the original planner of the vast temple, of all the cunning carvers of the countless statues, and all the quaint and excellent devices so highly wrought, so carefully finished in every part, the names are all unknown—all absorbed in this vast labor of love and faith.

Not all; for that of SABINE, daughter of STEINBACH, has come down to us, clothed, doubtless, with much of the fiction attaching to the miraculous, but embodying also historical truth enough, to render the narration of the half-legend of absorbing interest. As the story is now related, her father, the great architect of the Cathedral of his own native Strasbourg, died, as so many great masters had done before him, ere the completion of the temple upon which he rested his name here, and hope of salvation hereafter. He died conjuring his son Jean, and his daughter Sabine, (both devoted with success to the art of their father), not to allow any name but that of Steinbach to become associated with the termination of the rapidly advancing structure.

It was decreed that the completion of the work should be confided to the architect who should within twelve days produce the most excellent plan for that object. Among those who had worked in the vast *ateliers* of Erwin were two youthful architect-sculptors, who had beheld, not without the deep sympathy of artists as well as lovers, the talent, the devotion, and the beauty of Sabine. The elder of these was Bernard de Sunden, a Silesian, a youth of mild character, tinctured with a strong cast of the deep devotion which animated many of the greatest workers of that high period of Christian art. The younger was known by the name of Polydore, and was a native of Boulogne; of a reckless and ambitious character. On the eleventh day he exhibited a plan for completing the work; it was a magnificent design, full of the boldness and daring which distinguished the

character of its author. Sabine saw it—wondered at its beauty, and retired to a small cell in the old *atelier*, which was her own peculiar studio, to weep; for she saw that her brother Jean was vanquished, and another, perhaps more dear, was vanquished also—the meek Bernard, who had found more favor in the secret heart of the artist-maiden than the daring Polydore.

Night came at last to hide her bitter tears, as she wept herself to sleep. But in that sleep the highest regions of art seemed miraculously opened to her. She saw in the dream-land of her artist vision temples and palaces in which the highest beauties of Gothic art were carried far beyond all she had seen on earth; and waking, the dream was so palpable, so clear, that she traced the temple of the splendid vision upon a sheet of parchment with such accuracy, that it seemed a realization of her dream. It was the twelfth day—the prize was adjudged to Sabine.

The work advanced rapidly; the matchless sculptures of the portal of the great clock-tower, excited great enthusiasm, and all expressed the deepest admiration, except Polydore, who had daringly demanded the hand of the maiden-architect, and been refused. But what excited the greatest wonder was the rapid progress of these intricate and elaborate sculptures, which every morning seemed even more advanced and more beautiful than the night before; in so much that it was deemed miraculous, and superstition whispered strange stories of bands of angels toiling in the night at the edifice, and that Sabine was visibly protected by Heaven.

Only two days more were required to complete the exquisite portal, when, on the morning of the last day but one, a great part of the work was found defaced and broken. It was then that the fickleness of popular favor was truly shown; the destruction it was averred was the work of demons; the labors of Sabine were rejected of God. Bernard de Sunden alone still believed in the piety and goodness of Sabine; and at night, the last night, his figure might have been seen gliding from pinnacle to pinnacle, among the mingled turrets and scaffolding of the cathedral, towards the summit of the great portal. Arrived at the place where the greatest mutilation had been committed, he was near falling from the yet unprotected wall on which he stood, as he saw, advancing towards him, a shadowy white figure, so slender, so graceful, so beaming

with a divine earnestness and expression, that, as the beautiful head seemed surrounded with a kind of glory in the ray of gentle moonlight that fell upon it through an opening of the tracery, he thought he beheld one of the angels whose immortal hands had been supposed to have shed such superhuman beauty upon the sculptures of the portal.

But as he stood and gazed, supported against the crocketed pinnacle of the turret, he perceived that it was no other than Sabine herself; and that she trod the giddy path along the narrow walls, across the tottering planks, over the gaping void of darkness beneath—not with the cunning and experienced step of the waking, but with the wonderful instinct of the sleeping. Thus was the magical progress of the work explained to the wondering Bernard, as he beheld the sleeping girl ply the mallet and the chisel with a rapidity and skill that plainly showed she was dreaming the *execution* of the work of which she had already dreamed the *design*.

As Bernard stood concealed in the shadow of a buttress, another stealthy step was heard, and a tall, dark figure emerged from the dark intricacies of the upper part of this vast building, and, advancing towards the opposite side of the top of the portal to the one where Sabine was working, commenced with mallet and chisel a destruction, as active as the restoration which was going on on the opposite side. The two figures might have symbolized the spirits of Good and Evil—of Creation and Destruction.

"Yes!" exclaimed Bernard, in an under-tone, "yes, Polydore! thou art as truly the *demon* who destroyed, as that girl is the angel who created the work."

Polydore turned fiercely towards the speaker, by whom he found himself thus unexpectedly discovered, and advanced furiously towards him; a fearful struggle was about to commence on the narrow wall, with a yawning gulf on either side, hundreds of feet deep, when Polydore in his rage, missed his footing—and fell headlong into the deep, dark chasm below.

The day had arrived when the great portal of the clock-tower was to be exhibited to the public; the morning beamed brightly on the light new stone-work of the vast building; and as the workmen prepared to remove the scaffolding and screen from the work—completed as it seemed, by a miracle—the body of Poly-

dore, with the evidences of his guilt, the mutilating mallet and chisel, lying near his hand, was discovered beneath the arch of the great, and now perfect portal.

The chroniclers add that Sabine bore her honors meekly, as became true genius; that Strasbourg became very proud of her name; that she became the wife of Bernard de Sunden; and that together, husband and wife planned and executed many works of high art—among them the exquisite sculptures of Magdebourg.

The Cathedral of Strasbourg has heavily felt the finger of time, and many of its beauties are crumbling away. The people of the city have moved in the matter, and Grass, the favorite living sculptor has been entrusted with the repairs and restoration of this wonderful monument of the art and religious enthusiasm of the Middle Ages. The sculptor has told in marble, the story of Sabine; and the statue will fill a prominent niche in the great temple with which her family name is so immortally wedded.



FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE.



Y DEAR COSMOPOLITAN:—I find much time to visit artists and collections, but little time to write.

Natural dislike to the pen has something to do with this listlessness, and the climate; and besides, one does not like to write as you demand, "critically," of friends and friendly studios. I will, however, finish up the list of American artists here, which I began in my last letter for the Journal. Passion week and Lent are not good seasons for *critical* speaking, for the Carnival put us all in too good humor to say spiteful things, though I confess to have heard of many *sharp* things and sly suggestions of food for gossip during the Carnival week among *our* representatives here. But as I am not one of the *nil conscire sibi* tribe, I had not better talk of masks and masquerade adventures. To my task, and a brief letter.

In my last I believe I did not refer particularly to Paul Akers, the Maine State Sculptor. He is, I hear it said on all sides, one of the most promising artists in Rome. Already his genius strikes out for itself in originals, and we may look for

something very fine from his chisel ere he arrives at the age, artistic, of Powers, or Gibson, or Crawford, or Tenerani. He is now commissioned by a countryman for copies of several of the great antiques—the "Dying Gladiator," the "Sophocles" of the Lateran Palace, &c., &c. Of these commissions any sculptor might be proud, and since they are to go to America, the first copies in marble, life size, they may well excite public attention. I predict for him a great success. Among the last works from his busy hands is a bust of Mrs. Belmonte, daughter of Commodore Perry. Like all of his busts, its combination of the ideal and real is most exquisitely done, giving not only the form and feature of the subject, but catching the very soul-expression in such a manner as to make the marble almost seem a "thing of life." Akers' finest original, not yet in marble, is his "Una and the Lion," after Spenser's "Fairie Queen," Canto III. Stanza 9. The sharpest critics of anatomy pronounce the lion superior to any modern work—not excepting CANOVA'S—which is high praise. The artist has studied the animal from life for years, that *this* work should do him honor; and it is but fair to anticipate his most ample success. The figure of Una asleep on the lion's mane, is most exquisitely wrought in *pose*, limb, and drapery. When it is carried into marble the artists reputation will be among "the stars."

Moshier is busy as usual. His last original is the "Prodigal Son," which is fine enough as a work of art, but singularly *distrait* in conception; for the "Son" instead of being a fast young man of about twenty, is a boy of about fourteen. Where the Sculptor finds hints for this adolescence of his subject we are at a loss to discover.

Crawford's disease in his left eye threatens to disable him for some time, even if it does not ultimately cost him his life, of which his friends greatly fear. He was in the United States last summer attending to orders, when his eye began to protrude, showing disease behind it. It soon became very painful, and he went to Paris to consult with the physicians there. They prescribed rest from all labor, and some remedies. He came on to this city, and immediately entered upon his commission assiduously. This aggravated the disease so much that an examination was held, and it was discovered that there was a cancerous tumor on the socket of the orb. He was again ordered to Paris, and